



Anne E. Campbell • County Superintendent of Schools

CONTACT: PATRICIA LOVE

[plove@smcoe.org](mailto:plove@smcoe.org)

650.802.5559

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **San Mateo County Mourns Students in Parkland, Florida School Shooting and Reiterates Commitment to School Safety**

REDWOOD CITY, CA. On behalf of San Mateo County's Coalition for Safe Schools and Communities the San Mateo County Office of Education, the County of San Mateo, and the County Sheriff's Office want to express our deep sadness at the senseless loss of life on the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School campus in Parkland, Florida yesterday. We also want to share with parents and community members the safety protocols currently in place across the county and in our schools and to reassure them the safety of our children is our top priority.

Our education, government, and youth-serving agencies across San Mateo County have invested great effort and hard work to create multiple layers of safety nets to keep our youth safe in our schools and communities. The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office has deployed additional deputies to their service areas to provide reassurance to the community in response to yesterday's violence. But we also feel it is of utmost importance to inform parents and community members about the safety protocols currently in place across the county and in our schools and to not only respond to tragedy, but hopefully avoid it.

San Mateo County's Coalition for Safe Schools and Communities is a collaborative, multi-agency group that was formed in 2013, following the fatal shooting of 26 students and staff at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. The mission of the Coalition for Safe Schools and Communities is to identify and address safety needs of county youth, to work across agencies to implement best practices in emergency response and mental health, and to support with a legal framework for lawful information-sharing, using a common language.

"In San Mateo County, we place the safety of our students and staff as our highest priority," said County Superintendent Anne Campbell. "The Coalition for Safe Schools and Communities reflects our County's commitment to making sure that every school and every student is safe."

Through this collaborative process, the Coalition produced the [Big Five](#), a common emergency plan adopted by all San Mateo County School Districts and law enforcement agencies. The Big Five protocol supports high quality training for school staff and community members and ensures clear channels of communications with schools, first responders, parents and community members should an emergency occur.

"Our hearts are heavy over yesterday's events and grow heavier each time another of these senseless tragedies occur. After Sandy Hook, we all hoped to never have another senseless shooting occur but realized we — the schools, the County, law enforcement and the community — had to be prepared for the possibility. The Coalition grew from that somber recognition and draws its strength from our mutual goal of keeping our campuses safe," said Supervisor Don Horsley who helped spearhead the countywide school safety effort.

Sheriff Carlos Bolanos added, "I am extremely saddened by the events that happened yesterday in Florida. The established partnership in San Mateo County between emergency responders and schools is critical in keeping our community safe. My deputies are well trained and committed to providing a high level of public safety services. The collaboration between our schools and law enforcement supports the goals of the Big Five Protocol during an emergency."

In addition to the Big Five, the Coalition released a [Student Threat Assessment Protocol and Suicide Prevention Toolkit](#) in August of 2017, and to date it has provided training to every school district in San Mateo County. While not a foolproof method of assessing risk, the Student Threat Assessment Protocol provides every school with an evidence-based process and is intended to provide early intervention and support to students who may be struggling.

To support this process, there is also a countywide Level Two Student Threat Assessment Team that meets on a regular basis to review cases.

Tools such as the Big Five and Student Threat Assessment are effective tools in strengthening safety and provide agency leaders and school officials a clear path of action. Resources like these, in combination with strong collaboration and relationships across agencies, provide a more consistent level of safety than high tech security devices and fences.

The County law enforcement and emergency services community reminds citizens, parents, and students that if they "See something; Say something." Children can be taught to speak to a trusted adult, students should be encouraged to share information of concern with a teacher, counselor, or principal, and adults should relay information to a supervisor. Calling 9-1-1 also lets public safety personnel address the issue immediately.

For more information, please contact Nancy Magee, Associate Superintendent of the Student Services Division at the San Mateo County Office of Education, at [nmagee@smcoe.org](mailto:nmagee@smcoe.org) or (650) 802-5588.

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The San Mateo County Office of Education is committed to ensuring excellence and equity in education by inspiring students, investing in teachers, invigorating leaders, and involving communities.

